

## UNBBNBMCED CLERGY

For they are heirs of heaven all that are  
tonsured. And in choir and in churches,  
Christ's own ministers. It hecometh clerks  
Christ for to serve, And knaves unshorn to  
cart and to work.

\*  
Therefore rebuke me not, Beason, I you pray; For  
in my conscience I know what Christ wold that I  
wrought. Prayers of perfect man and penance  
discreet Is the dearest labour that pleases our  
Lord.'

\*  
Quoth Conscience \* by Christ I can not see  
this holds; It seems not perfectness in  
cities for to beg.<sup>11</sup>

Wycliffe, though he did not attack this class with so much direct personal censure as he bestowed on the friars and prelates, argued with ever-increasing vehemence against the ideas that kept such large numbers of clerics afloat on society. The employment of clergy in secular business seemed to him an abomination. That a deacon should be paid to keep the accounts of a rich subject seemed to him as grave a scandal as that a Bishop should be paid for the same purpose by the King.<sup>2</sup> He wished to spiritualise the minds and lives of the ministers of religion, and he rightly judged that their present employments were not calculated to have that effect. The Catholic Church in the days of Hildebrand had aimed at a similar mark, and had, in pursuit of an ideal standard, cut them off from the duties and joys of family life by the law of celibacy. That law remained, with a train of attendant evils, but the worldliness of the clergy remained none the less, encouraged by secular employments ten times more than it would have been by family life. Wycliffe saw the double mistake. He had always protested against the engagement of God's servants in mundane affairs; towards the end of his life he came to approve of their marriage, and his followers pressed on with fresh vigour the attack on celibacy which he began.<sup>3</sup>

While deprecating the employment of tonsured clerks in governmental departments and houses of business, the reformer struck another equally serious blow at minor orders of clergy, by attacking the Catholic ideal of a pious life. To

<sup>1</sup> P. *PL* C, vi. 44-91.      • Matt., 242      « See **Ap.**